

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE SECDEF INFO DA JCS CINCPAC
USCINCEUR CH CARMISH MAAG THERAN CDRUSAMC ALEX ODRI NEW DELHI
FROM ODRP/ISLAMABAD JUN 28

QUOTE S E C R E T /ODRP-M

SUBJ: UP-GUNNING OF M-48 TANKS (U)

A. SECDEF 142007Z JAN 75 (NOTAL)

B. SECSTATE 142647/181538Z JUN 75 (NOTAL)

1. (C) REF A GAVE APPROVAL TO THE GOP TO RETROFIT ITS M-47 AND
M-48 TANKS BUT NOT UP-GUNNING. THIS POLICY DECISION WAS IMPLEMENTED
BY THE GOP ON 5 FEB 75 WHEN A CONTRACT WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE GOI
AND BROWN, McLAUGHLIN AND YORK (BMY) FOR THE REBUILD OF 270
PAKISTAN MED TANKS (147 M47'S AND 123 M48'S) IN IRAN.

2. (C) THE GOP HAS NOW MADE AN OFFICIAL REQUEST THAT THE 123
M48 TANKS PROGRAMMED FOR REBUILD BE UP-GUNNED TO THE 105MM
CONFIGURATION AND THE P AND A DATA BE PROVIDED FOR THE
FOLLOWING MODIFICATION KITS.

A. 105 GUN M-68 - 123 EA.

B. 105 GUN MOUNT M-87 - 123 EA.

3. (U) EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT PAK REQUEST FOR UPGUNNING BE
APPROVED AND THAT REQUESTED P AND A DATA BE PROVIDED THE GOP.

4. (C) THE PAK ARMY IS NOTABLY WEAK IN MEDIUM TANKS. THIS
DEFICIENCY IN NUMBERS TO AUTHORIZED LEVELS WILL CONTINUE FOR
SOME YEARS BECAUSE (1) THE PROCUREMENT LEAD TIME FOR NEWLY
MANUFACTURED TANKS IS SEVERAL YEARS AHEAD, (2) PRESENT DOLLAR
COSTS INHIBITS ANY REPLENISHMENT PROCUREMENT AT THIS TIME.

THEREFORE THE PAK ARMY IS SEEKING AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO MAKE

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THEIR RESIDUAL TANK INVENTORY MORE EFFECTIVE.

5. (C) SOME 18 MONTHS AGO THE USA RMY SAID UPGUNNING OF PAK TANKS TO A 105 MM WAS NOT COST EFFECTIVE. HOWEVER, TODAY'S INFLATED PRICES FOR A NEW WEAPONS SYSTEM ACQUISITION NOW MAKES UPGUNNING OF RESIDUAL TANK INVENTORIES COST EFFECTIVE. AS A RESULT THE U.S. IS NOW STANDARDIZING ON THE 105MM FOR ALL TANK GUNS AND RETROFITTING ITS M-48A3 TO 105MM CONFIGURATION. THE PAKS WANT TO BE A PART OF THE ECONOMIES OF U.S. VOLUME PRODUCTION AND NOT BE CAUGHT WITH A NEWLY REFURBISHED TANK, BUT AN OBSOLETE GUN. ALTHOUGH IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO PROCURE SPARE PARTS FOR 90MM GUNS THROUGH A LIFE TYPE BUY, THE PROCEDURE IS VERY EXPENSIVE AND ONLY GUARANTEES A LIMITED FUTURE USE OF THE GUN. THEREFORE BECAUSE OF COST CONSIDERATION, TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENT AND FUTURE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT THE PAK ARMY WANTS TO MODIFY TO 105MM.

6. (S) WHEN WE COMPARE THE QUALITATIVE FORCE OF PAKISTAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS WE FIND THE INDIANS HAVE A LARGE NUMERICAL AND QUALITATIVE SUPERIORITY IN MEDIUM TANKS. THEY ALSO HAVE AN INDUSTRIAL BASE WHICH PROVIDES THE VIJAYANTA TANK, A VERSION OF THE U.K. VICKERS. THE PAKS ON THE OTHER HAND HAVE NO TANK INDUSTRIAL BASE, A SIGNIFICANT NUMERICAL INFERIORITY AND A QUALITATIVE DISPARITY IN TANK WEAPONRY. INDIA HAS COMPARABLE NUMBERS OF T-54 RUSSIAN DESIGNED 100MM TANKS TO MATCH THE PAKS 90MM M-47/48 TANKS. THE CHINESE TOOK THE T-54 100MM RUSSIAN DESIGN AND BUILT A SIGNIFICANTLY INFERIOR REPLICA WITH NO LATERAL OR VERTICAL GUN STABILIZATION AND CALLED IT THE T-59. IT IS THE NUMERICAL BACKBONE OF THE PAK ARMY. IN SIMILAR QUANTITIES THE INDIANS HAVE THE IMPROVED RUSSIAN VERSION OF THE T-54, THE T-55 WITH A 100MM GUN. INDIANS ALSO POSSESS A LARGE QUANTITY OF U.K. CENTURIONS WITH 105MM VIJAYANTA TANKS, AN ADAPTATION OF THE U.K. VICKERS. THE POINT HERE IS NOT SO MUCH TO RECITE INDIAN AND PAKISTAN TANK PARITY AND DISPARITY IN NUMBERS BUT POINT OUT THAT A 90MM GUN IS NO LONGER USED ON A TANK, ALL MODERN TANKS HAVE LARGER GUNS.

7. (C) WE RECOGNIZE THAT PROVISION OF TANKS BY USG TO PAKISTAN HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN A HIGHLY SENSITIVE ISSUE BOTH TO THE INDIANS AND, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE INDO-PAK 1965 WAR, TO ASIA. ALTHOUGH THE UPGUNNING OF EXISTING US-SUPPLIED PAK TANK INVENTORY MAY ENCOUNTER SME CRITICISM IN LIGHT OF THIS SENSITIVITY, IT IS ALMOST CERTAINLY THE LEAST CONTROVERSIAL WAY FOR THE USG TO ASSIST PAKISTAN AT THIS TIME TO MEET ITS LEGITIMATE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN IMPROVED MEDIUM TANK CAPABILITY. IT IS SURELY A MORE

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EASILY ACCEPTABLE OPTION UNDER PRESENT POLICY GUIDELINES THAN THE SALE TP PAKISTAN OF M-60A1S TANKS (FOR WHICH THE PAKS HAVE REQUESTED P AND A DATA) AND COULD HELP HEAD OFF EFFORTS BY THE GOP TO ACQUIRE MORE MODERN AND CONTROVERSIAL WEAPONS AT THIS TIME.

8. (C) FYI, CLARIFICATION OF REQUEST FOR 30 SURPLUS M-47 TANKS AS REQUESTED BY REF B WILL BE PROVIDED BY SEPARATE MESSAGE.

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